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Remember the Hivites

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(orig under Beilenson)

MOST OPPONENTS of the SALT II agreement have based their objections purely on the treaty's unfairness to the United States. But there is another reason for rejection, and it goes deeper. *The Federalist* (No. 3) states: "Among the many objects to which a wise and free people find it necessary to direct their attention, that of providing for their safety seems to be first." The SALT II agreement hinders the attainment of safety, our chief aim, because the SALT process relies on two untrustworthy tools of statesmanship, treaties and intelligence.

The rallying cry of SALT proponents is peace, but throughout the ages war has coexisted comfortably with treaties promising peace. Granted that nuclear peace should be assimilated to our chief goal of survival, the question is not whether we want nuclear peace; practically all of us do. The real question is by what tool peace can be kept. As our instrument of choice, the SALT process selects treaties that attempt to limit nuclear arms.

In his 1977 Inaugural Address President Jimmy Carter said: "We will move this year a step toward our ultimate goal: the elimination of all nuclear weapons from this earth." Had anyone asked Carter by what tool, his reply would have had to be: by international law or treaty. International law comprises treaties and the customs of so-called civilized nations. Custom is more uncertain than treaties, and international law has been violated as often as treaties. The reply can therefore be shortened to treaties.

In his daily Bible reading, Carter must have skipped the 34th chapter of Genesis, which relates the negotiation of a disarmament treaty and its consequences. Jacob bought land and camped in the land of the Hivites. After their Prince Hamor saw Dinah, Jacob's daughter, "and lay with her, and defiled her," Hamor and his father King Shechem met with Jacob's sons and offered marriage, any gift asked, the sharing of the Hivite land, and intermarriage among the two peoples so that they would become one. Jacob's sons agreed on condition that all the male Hivites be circumcised. In urging ratification of the treaty, Shechem told his people: "These men are peaceable with us." The Hivites accepted the condition, and their males were circumcised.

Immediately after the mass circumcision, the sons of Jacob, having in effect disarmed the Hivites by

treaty, fell upon them, slew the males, spoiled the city, and seized the women, children, and cattle. The disease that killed the Hivites was treaty reliance. The treaty on which they had relied had disarmed them.

From earliest times to the present, the history of political treaties has been a dreary repetition of breaches. *The Federalist* (No. 15) relates "how little dependence is to be placed on treaties." Unreliable treaties become more untrustworthy with an unreliable partner. If John Doe told his friends that he intended to risk all his worldly goods in a poker game with a known cardsharp, the friends would shake their heads. Yet we consider ourselves sagacious in staking our survival on a SALT treaty with the USSR, whose ideology blesses cheating as a virtue.

Another characteristic of treaties exposes their further flaw as a shield. Private contracts have the ultimate enforcement power of the sheriff behind them; there is no sheriff among nations. Against a country which breaks a treaty of great moment, the only effective remedy is war. If in breach of a SALT treaty the USSR secretly created and then suddenly deployed more nuclear arms than the treaty permitted, American cancellation of the treaty would not repair the damage. If we were overmatched by the deployment, our injury might well be fatal because of the long time it would take us to equal the Soviet arsenal.

BUT THIS is impossible, the proponents of SALT claim. Through our intelligence, particularly our "national technical means of verification," we know what the Soviets are doing.

If, after deciding to hazard all his worldly goods in a poker game with a cardsharp, John Doe announced that he was relying on a foolproof system to detect cheating, his friends would deem him a fool. When we play SALT treaties with the USSR for our lives and justify our conduct by our ability to catch the Soviets cheating, we are—to be polite—unwise. And apart from the character of our opponent, the lamp of intelligence always has flickered and misled. The intelligence process has been almost as untrustworthy as treaties.

Despite the billions we spend annually on intelligence, we have been regularly surprised. President Carter complained that his intelligence arm misled him on Iran. He mistakenly assumed that this—as he thought—isolated failure was not typical and could be cured by an order to be more efficient. In fact, American intelligence frequently has erred, but not because its practitioners have been either numskulls or knaves. Had Carter studied the history of the tool, he would have discovered that the intelligence of all nations has been unreliable.

David Kahn devoted many years to his excellent study of Nazi intelligence, and he had complete access to all the records. He found German intelligence incompetent, particularly at the top. Although Anglo-American intelligence was better than German, if Kahn had studied the intelligence of any nation with the same admirable thoroughness, he would have reached the same conclusion. Immediately preceding and during World War II, intelligence errors of the gravest sort occurred everywhere; they were in the judging process, and mostly at the top.

To begin at home, we hardly covered ourselves with glory by being surprised at Pearl Harbor or later at the Battle of the Bulge. Britain and France disregarded the Nazi preparation for war. Britain failed to gather and take account of the information that was easiest to obtain: evidence of the weakness of its French ally. Though warned by the British, Josef Stalin was surprised by the Nazi attack and lost hundreds of thousands of soldiers. There were no intelligence heroes at the top. This untrustworthiness will necessarily continue, because intelligence is a guessing game with each country trying to outwit and mislead its adversaries.

Our own intelligence estimates have missed the mark widely in vital matters. In 1941 we estimated that Germany would defeat Russia in three months. The same year we were surprised at Pearl Harbor. We were again surprised by the North Korean attack on South Korea, by China's attack against General Douglas MacArthur's forces when we invaded North Korea, by the 1956 Israeli-English-French attack on Egypt, and by the Arabs' 1973 Yom Kippur attack against Israel.